

TITLE OF ENTRY: BIOTECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURE: OPENING THE DOORS TO A NEW CONVERSATION

Agency: Ketchum

Client: Council for Biotechnology Information

Category: (8) Reputation / Brand Management - Associations



To learn about GMOs, most consumers said they would search online and would use the terms GMO or genetically modified foods

Insight: For search, it's important to use the language consumers understand – "GMO"

Result: Language on the website reflected this tone:

"Skeptical of GMOs? We understand. We want to do a better job answering your questions."

PLANNING

Program Development: Under pressure to launch in only 60 days, Ketchum built a robust, mobile **responsive web platform that brought the idea of "embracing skepticism" to life.** The platform enables consumers to ask any questions about GMOs; and at the same time, set the expectation that all questions would be answered by the most appropriate experts possible in the shortest amount of time. And, that no question would be off limits!

A more static part of the platform, the "Explore" section, enables consumers to **explore the basics of GMOs in a way that is streamlined, easy to navigate and non-threatening.** Given that GM technology was never properly marketed to consumers, this part of the site attempts to do just that in simple, visual terms to promote individual discovery.

Expert Recruitment: Ketchum and CBI recruited 30 experts initially (expanded to 100 in the first 6 months) focused on: health, nutrition, farming, industry and agricultural economics.

Media Engagement: Earned media led all communications efforts. Exclusives were negotiated with *New York Times* and CNBC prior to launch to initiate media coverage.

EXECUTION

Media: Prominent national media exclusives drove more than 100,000 page views in week one, and resulted in more than 200 questions.

Expert Community: Reaction from our target audience and expert community was strong – filled with enthusiasm for the platform, but also suggestions for improvement. In an effort to show our commitment to listening, the team implemented more than 100 site changes in the first 4 weeks to meet these needs.

Industry Support: Five agriculture groups were recruited as official supporters of GMO Answers to borrow equity from established brands within farming.

Q & A: The logistics of curating hundreds of responses from 100 experts and 6 companies in the first weeks proved a significant challenge. The team created a process for daily

communications to ensure every question was reviewed, sent to an expert and responded to as quickly as possible.

Social Media: Twitter became a significant engagement tool to attract our target audience to the site. With an average of one tweet a minute about GMOs, we initiated a pilot to convert skeptics using a strategy that triages and then bridges from a point of angst to a point of openness and consideration. In a random sample of tweets, we found:

- 43% of the GMO tweets were scare-tweets
- 36% were directed at the government
- 9% news

The Twitter customer service pilot, conducted for 60 days, engaged more than 150 Food eVangelists who tweeted negatively about GMOs, and successfully neutralized over 80% of their conversations.

EVALUATION

Objective 1: Build and attract more than 60,000 visitors (10K/month) to an online destination that improves their understanding of GMOs

- GMO Answers captured over 100,000 unique visitors during the soft launch phase
- In focus group testing, 79% of viewers said the content on the site was believable
- 57% said the content would bring them back again
- The diversity of viewpoints, comments and content both in support and opposition to GMOs is a strength of the site and is viewed as favorable:
 - Improves the believability of the content
 - Enhances the credibility of the overall site

Objective 2: Ensure that at least 50% of visitors view the content as "credible" during soft launch

- 64% said the experts answering questions were credible
- 57% of participants in a post-launch focus group said the content was credible

Objective 3: Secure 50 balanced feature stories about biotechnology in top-tier media

- 25 interviews conducted
- More than 60 articles scored neutral or positive in top-tier media

Objective 4: Secure placement within top 50 search results in 20 common questions about GMOs

- At end of the six-month soft launch, GMO Answers responses appeared in the top 50 search results for 25 common questions about GMOs

Objective 5: Answer at least 60% of questions posted to the site within 6 months of launch

- 425 of 600 questions (70%) answered within 6 month launch phase